

A Two-year-Old Goes to Nursery School. *A case study of separation reactions.* By Marjorie Graham Janis. (Tavistock Publications, 1964, 25s.)

The sub-title of this book reveals its scope and limitation. The case study is of one normal, highly verbal child—the youngest of three girls in a professional middle-class family. From the age of two years and three months she attended a well-run nursery school, where parents were welcomed, for two mornings a week. The writer, as a friend of the family, had exceptional opportunities for direct observation of the child, and for collecting observations from the parents and the nursery school staff. The study was undertaken as part of a Masters' programme in a New York college of education, and its presentation bears the marks of this, though the style of writing is simple—at times naively so. Few informed people will need persuading that two years is too early for a child to attend nursery school, but in this study one suspects that more factors were at work in producing stress in this child than the mere fact of attending a nursery school at such an early age. The writer admits this in her conclusions, where she raises points for further study suggested by this case, including the variety of defence mechanism manifestations that even a very young child may show in dealing with stress. Readers anxious to get the gist of the research may be impatient with the amount of detailed observation and verbatim reporting in the body of the book, and find it more rewarding to read first the chapter describing the purpose and plan of the book and that entitled "Discussion and Conclusions," before the others.

This work was stimulated by Mr. Robertson's studies of children in hospital, and it has some value in indicating that much less dramatic separation circumstances may yet produce harmful stress in young children, from which they may take time to recover. A follow-up of this particular child was made at eight years of age, when she was attending normal school, and certain persisting trends were noted as possibly, though not necessarily, resulting from the early separation experience.

Mary M. Lindsay

The Unseen Killer. By Donald McCormick. (Muller, 20s., 1963.)

This book is an anthology of many opinions on suicide, linked together with comments and notes by Mr. McCormick. Much of it is lively, stimulating and well-arranged and is comprehensive enough to fill a few gaps in anyone's knowledge.

But it is a pity that many points are spoiled by confusion, over-statement or contradiction: "depression is an illness in which the lay person can help effect a cure just as much as a doctor" seems a highly dangerous remark and likely to increase the suicide rate. As Mr. McCormick adds "not all doctors would perhaps agree" (for once an under-statement), but a paragraph later he contradicts this by saying that all people suffering from depression should see a doctor. Nor is he very happy in the space given to his various authors. The views of the general practitioner scarcely deserve seven pages (pages 111-118); and his quotations of a coroner's views on psychiatrists reach a high level of sweeping generalisation, only just rivalled by a psychiatrist's reply to this. His terminology is at times loose and inaccurate and when in doubt, he says "evidence or statistics show this", but quotes none.

Nonetheless, it is still worth reading if it serves a purpose in focusing more attention on an unfortunately neglected social disaster.

R. F. Tredgold

An Introduction to the Northern Ireland Mental Health Act, 1961. By S. J. Knox, M.D., D.P.M. Published by the N.I. Association for Mental Health, 1963, 2s. 6d.

This clearly presented summary will be greatly welcomed by social workers and others engaged in mental health activities, and by students who, while not needing to study the Northern Ireland Mental Health Act exhaustively, want to be made aware of its principal provisions. It will also enable readers in this country to make a quick comparison of the ways in which the Act differs from our own counterpart.

In making this information available, Dr. William McCartan, in a Foreword, maintains that the Northern Ireland Association is fulfilling one of its most important functions—"the presentation of reliable information on mental health matters as widely, lucidly and simply as possible".

A. L. Hargrove